

RESIDENTIAL PARKING PLAN FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
(January, 2013 by City Manager Jay Ash)

Here are some frequently asked questions. In general, it may be helpful to understand that the term “resident,” or its variation, also applies to the vehicle in question (does the vehicle “live” in the city, which is determined by where it is registered – if registered in the city, then yes it does live in the city). If a question still remains, please contact jash@chelseama.gov for a response.

1. Why is the City adopting a new residential parking program?

Many residents have complained about the lack of parking in their neighborhoods. One study we undertook indicated that as many as 20% of the cars parked overnight were from out-of-town. The problem is especially acute on the border with Everett, as that city adopted a similar residential parking program several years ago which ended up pushing many cars into Chelsea from Everett. The rationale, therefore, is to make Chelsea parking spaces available for vehicles that are contributing, through excise tax, towards maintaining streets. Additionally, other complaints existed, including visitor pass abuses and not being able to get a leased vehicle that was registered to a non-Chelsea address a valid parking sticker. This program creates many options for vehicles to secure parking privileges.

2. Why do I have to pay for a sticker when I already pay excise tax to the City?

Exactly! Although the program authorizes the City to charge for a sticker, we have no intention of doing so. So, your sticker is free (and thanks for paying your excise tax – it is helping us to repave streets – we’re spending millions this year to do so). Although the regulations say there will be a \$10 sticker fee, I anticipate it remaining free for the coming years.

3. Do I need a sticker if I park in my driveway?

No, stickers are only required on public streets. Some streets that you may think are public are not, so you should check the street signs to see if there is a residential parking prohibition sign on the street in question. Stickers are not required for driveways or private lots.

However, there is an additional benefit even if you regularly park on private property. With a sticker, the vehicle can park in places that are now prohibited. For example, a property owner on Cook Avenue, who has a driveway, will be able to park on Beacon Street if the car has a sticker on it.

4. Is my parking sticker just valid in my neighborhood?

No, a parking sticker is valid anywhere in the city. You must park in a legal space, but otherwise all Chelsea registered vehicles pay Chelsea excise tax which helps pay for Chelsea street repairs and are therefore allowed to park anywhere in Chelsea.

5. Why is the City limiting how many days a week I can have a guest?

Well, we are not limiting how many days a week you can have a guest. Instead, we're limiting how many times guests or those who are residents but haven't registered their vehicles in Chelsea can take up parking spaces from residents who have. Many neighborhoods are parking challenged, one way or another, so this program is meant to help relieve parking pressures for those who pay their fair share for the operation of a motor vehicle on city streets. You're welcomed to have guests, but when they start to impact your neighbors, we believe we have the right and responsibility to act. If you have special guest needs, though, we encourage you to talk to the parking clerk in the City Clerk's office to see if we can help resolve any issues that may arise.

6. *Tell me what I suppose to do to legally park my...*

- a. passenger vehicle that is legally registered in the city:
 - i. This type of vehicle is eligible for a residential parking sticker, provided that you owe no excise tax or parking fines. If you do not, and if you have not received a free parking sticker in the mail, you so go to the City Clerk's office at City Hall with a copy of your registration and some identification. If you owe outstanding charges, you need to clear those first before getting a sticker.
- b. passenger vehicle that is registered elsewhere:
 - i. If your vehicle is not registered in the city, among your options are to use a visitor pass (which is limited and is therefore not a permanent solution), buy a week-long pass (the number of weeks that you can buy is limited and is therefore not a permanent solution), park off a public street (like in a driveway, private parking lot or a private street), buy a 6-month non-resident pass (at a cost of \$300), or register your vehicle in Chelsea. You also have an option to petition the Traffic Commission, through the parking clerk in the City Clerk's office, for some special arrangement. We do not anticipate agreeing to many special arrangements, so the story will need to be very good!
- c. leased vehicle:
 - i. If your leased vehicle is registered in Chelsea, it will be treated like a passenger vehicle in 6a. If your leased vehicle is not-registered in Chelsea, it will be treated like a passenger vehicle in 6b. In this case, you may be able to have your lease holder register the car in Chelsea, which would then give you a 6a status. If not, the program provides an option for you to secure a non-resident pass by making sure that your leased vehicle is contributing to the cost of maintaining local streets.
- d. company car:
 - i. If your company car can be registered in Chelsea, it will be treated like a passenger vehicle in 6a. If your company car is not-registered in Chelsea, it will be treated like a passenger vehicle in 6b. If not, the program provides an option for you to secure a non-resident pass by making sure that your company vehicle is contributing to the cost of maintaining local streets.
- e. commercial vehicle:

- i. If your commercial vehicle, whether it is a passenger car, pick-up truck or van, is registered in Chelsea *and* is 6 wheels or less *and* 9' in height or less, it is eligible for a residential parking sticker. Otherwise, a commercial vehicle can have a non-resident sticker, provided it meets or is less than the size standards listed in this paragraph. (This program was adopted in part to aid owners of commercial vehicles who were being prohibited from parking their vehicles legally on city streets, including tradesmen whose vans also serve as personal vehicles.)
- f. commercial vehicle not described in 6e:
 - i. Commercial vehicles with either more than 6 wheels or higher than 9', or both, are prohibited from parking on city streets from 7p-7a. This would include high box vans, even though they may only have four wheels, and truck cabs. An exception would be for vehicles responding to an emergency, like a power outage.
- g. motorcycles:
 - i. Motorcycles are treated as passenger vehicles with the same rules applying as listed above.
- h. school busses:
 - i. Numerous residents drive school busses and take those vehicles home. Provided the school bus is 6 wheels or less and 9' high or less, a school bus is eligible for a residential pass if it is registered in Chelsea. If it is not, then it may be eligible for a non-residential pass. In general, school busses (vans or cars) are not treated any differently than company vehicles.

7. *Can I use my own visitor pass on my own vehicle that is not registered in the city?*

Yes, but we have designed the visitor pass program to (hopefully) prevent someone from cheating the system by using a visitor pass every day to keep a non-city registered vehicle on the public way. A visitor pass can only be used once a week. Two visitor passes are issued per unit. If someone suspects that visitor passes are being abused, I can be emailed about it at jash@chelseama.gov.

8. *What do I do if I have someone who is staying with me for a couple of days or longer?*

Assuming the car of your guest(s) is not registered in the city, your option would be to purchase a week-long pass, for \$15. The number of week-long passes that can be purchased per unit is limited. A week-long pass will be valid for seven consecutive days, once it is initially used. A week-long pass can be purchased well in advance, as you will activate it when needed. If you have someone staying a month, you may wish to purchase four, week-long passes. As always, a non-registered car can park in a driveway or private lot and not be subject to the requirements of the program. If a special circumstance arises, you can petition the Traffic Commission for relief.

9. *I have a son who is home from college during the summer, I have a girlfriend who is moving in, I spend part of the year at my summer home, or I borrow my parent's car*

regularly, etc., and the car is not registered in the city. I am a resident, though, can't I get a resident sticker?

Resident refers to where the car lives, as demonstrated by its registration. In each of these cases cited, the car is not registered in the city, and thus is not eligible for a resident sticker. The options for the car in question are listed in #6b.

10. Why is my street subject to the overnight restriction but not streets like those on Admiral's Hill?

Generally, the City only regulates parking rules on public ways, not private ways. Exceptions for regulations do exist, i.e. parking in front of a fire hydrant on a private way. This program only applies to public ways, unless owners of private ways request this program to be extended to their street. Again, in general, public vs. private way treatment is varied.

11. I take care of my elderly parent, who is a Chelsea resident, but my car is not registered in Chelsea. What should I do?

The City wishes to make it convenient for family, friends and agencies to provide care to those in need. Options for caregivers include utilizing the visitor pass of the person under their care, utilizing a driveway or paying to park at a meter, or petitioning the City for a caregiver pass. A caregiver pass is provided at no charge. In order to obtain a caregiver pass, the caregiver must have a letter from the person under their care and provide documentation that the caregiver is either representing an agency or lives at an address different than the person under their care (put another way, if you are living with the person you provide care to you are not eligible to receive a free caregiver pass for a vehicle that is registered outside the city).

12. I am a landlord and pay taxes in the city, why don't I qualify for a residential parking sticker even though I don't live in the city?

While we value our landlords, the issue is where does the vehicle call home, not where does the person call home. Thus, the rental or ownership relationship to the property is not what we are considering for a sticker, but, instead, where is the vehicle in question paying its excise tax. However, landlords who do not live in the city are eligible for a sticker, which is priced at \$50 for a 6-month period. If a landlord is not visiting in the city that often, or doesn't anticipate being at the property during restriction hours, a landlord parking pass, allowing one visit a week, at a cost of \$10 might be a better option.

13. I am a contractor and will be performing repairs on a property with a residential parking restriction. Is there a way for my vehicle to be legally parked in the city?

Contractors have several options: 1) park in a driveway or private parking lot, 2) park at a parking meter, or 3) secure a pass by visiting the City Clerk's office – there is a charge for a pass, and its use is restricted.

14. I own a business, but do not live in the city. Many of my employees do not live in the city as well. What are we supposed to do?

First, you should determine if the streets surrounding your business require you to have a parking sticker or pass. Remember that the program is restricting parking on city streets from 12-5a, or 2-5a in certain areas, and during the daytime in certain other areas (generally around the courthouse, train station, hospital and Massport garage). It is possible that you do not require a sticker or pass at all. However, if you do, refer to #6.

15. I am hosting a special occasion (party, meeting, wake) in an area and at a time when parking is restricted. Is there an option to allow my guests to park?

Yes there is. A package of “party passes” may be purchased for a nominal fee at the City Clerk’s office. The passes are valid between the hours of 5a-2a. They are invalid between 2a-5a. If your guests will be staying past 2a, they must adhere to the other rules of the program. The number of times you may secure party passes is restricted to three times annually.

16. I received a parking sticker in the mail that is a duplicate or for a plate that I no longer have. May I use it on another vehicle?

No, you may not. Only stickers with the vehicle’s proper license plate listed on the sticker may be used. Invalid stickers should be returned to the City Clerk’s office. If you did not receive a valid sticker, you may be able to exchange the invalid sticker for a valid one.

17. The new program has not resolved my parking issue. How do I get my issue address?

We do not believe this program solves every parking issue impacting local residents. For example, we have not attempted to solve the complaint of out-of-towners parking near bus stops and then taking the bus into Boston (we have not solve that, yet, because the solutions would have created other problems for those living near bus stops). If the program is not working for you, let us know. We will be reviewing it and may amend it.

18. Did we adopt this program as a clever/sneaky way of raising revenues?

No, that was not our intent. We believe the program will be revenue neutral, as there are many costs to start-up and maintain the program. However, to the extent that an excess of revenues does get generated, we will put that money back into the program and street repairs.

19. Are there 24-hour meters anywhere, or a public parking lot that we can utilize to park?

Not currently, but this is under consideration.

20. I have just found out that I will have someone staying overnight and do not have a pass. City Hall is closed. Is there a place for me to buy a pass?

No, not at this time. If you think this is a possibility, you should buy a visitor pass or a week-long pass in case you need it in the future for a situation like that?

21. For how long will the initial sticker and pass be valid?

We had originally envisioned this program starting last summer, but held off to make additional refinements (like sending stickers out to plate holders instead of making everyone come in to City Hall to get a sticker). So, the sticker that is to be placed into use for February 1st will be valid for approximately 18 months – expiring at the end of July of 2014.

22. Who will be doing enforcement and who do I contact if I'm having an immediate issue?

At the start-up, a combination of a police officer and several city-contracted parking enforcement officers will be doing overnight enforcement. A benefit to this program includes adding additional eyes on the street overnight. You should call 911 if you are experiencing a problem that needs to be addressed right away. Otherwise, you should contact the parking clerk in the City Clerk's office during regular City Hall hours.

23. Who do I petition for relief from the parking regulations?

The Traffic Commission is empowered to provide relief from parking regulations. It is suggested that petitioners first discuss their particular situation with the parking clerk located in the City Clerk's office. A petition is simply a letter from one or more people and addressed to the Traffic Commission, Chelsea City Hall, 500 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 02150, which describes the request.

24. Who should I blame/credit for this program?

Me: City Manager Jay Ash. The design of the program responds to numerous inquiries from residents and multiple public meetings I have had on the subject. Additionally, I have led the discussion on this program through several various municipal boards. I acknowledge the program is not perfect, but we have tried to think of everything. If you believe we missed it, though, or, conversely, if the program is working for you, please let me know (jash@chelseama.gov) as we will be conducting regular program reviews and may seek to amend it.

Added week of January 28, 2013:

25. My vehicles is registered in Chelsea, but I have not received a sticker as of yet. What should I do?

If you have not received a sticker in the mail as of yet, there is a slight possibility that it is still in process through the post office. More likely, though, is that the system we used to send out stickers did not have your vehicle as identified to receive a sticker. This could have happened for several reasons, including: 1) you owe outstanding excise tax and/or parking

fees (in this situation, you should have received a letter a month or two ago informing you of this); 2) you have a new plate, a change in address or some other situation that was not made aware to us by the Registry, whose data base we used to mail out stickers, 3) you have a leased vehicle and the registration has the leased vehicle's address as the holder of the lease, or some variation of that, 4) or something else. If you have not received a sticker and believe you are entitled to one, you should come to the City Clerk's office at City Hall with a copy of your registration and we'll help you figure this out. City Hall will be open extended hours this week and next (every Tuesday until 7p, and until 6p on Wed the 30th, Thurs the 31st and Monday the 4th.)

26. Can I just park a car on my front lawn?

Generally, no you cannot park a car on your front lawn. Zoning restrictions exist to prohibit such parking. In theory, someone wishing to legally do this would have to petition the Zoning Board for a variance. Such a variance is unlikely to be successful.

27. Where does the sticker go on my vehicle?

For those who have received a sticker in the mail, the reverse side of the letter you received explains and has a diagram for your assistance. A sticker is to be placed on the front windshield, driver's side, lower corner. If you are sitting at your steering wheel, it would be the lower left corner of your front windshield. When clearing your car from snow, you should expose the sticker.